

Red Arrow Brigade
FAMILY UPDATE #2
March 15, 2009

Here's our second update from Fort Bliss as many units of the 32nd BCT approach the end of their third week in the southern New Mexico desert.

One of the advantages of Fort Bliss as our mobilization station is the desert terrain and hot, arid climate that will prepare us for Iraq. Not this past week. The terrain sort of works, but the weather for much of the week seems closer to Wisconsin's than Iraq's. Normally, March is one of the driest months of the year here with average monthly rainfall of .39 inches. We got all of that (and then some) on Tuesday—a typical month of March rainfall in



a single afternoon. Then there's the temperature. Mornings here have been downright cold. Not Wisconsin-in-March cold, but colder than most of us expected—we even had frost on vehicle windshields a couple of days this past week. It has been warming up nicely by afternoon, but from the time the sun goes down at around 7:20 p.m. until well after dawn, it's quite chilly. But we're not complaining. At least it's not snowing here. And one good thing about cold mornings is that they predict less than sweltering afternoons.



Training continues at a pace that will get every soldier thoroughly prepared for Iraq before leaving Fort Bliss. The training is focused on specific unit missions, so it's a bit different for each of the brigade's 27 companies. While some companies are learning Arabic phrases, others are training on "lanes" (realistic training events that teach how to maneuver and communicate through a simulated battle) or practicing "combatives" (a combination of wrestling and various martial arts techniques).

The brigade's soldiers are also getting photos taken for a "yearbook" of the 32nd's deployment that is planned for production shortly after we all return. We'll tell you more about the book as it comes together, but it will include an individual photo of every one of the 32nd's 3,200 soldiers, and complete coverage of our mobilization experience from the first alert in December 2007 until the day we return to Wisconsin.



We're looking forward to documenting the Red Arrow Brigade's historic deployment and we



hope you'll enjoy the book. We still haven't figured out how much it will cost to produce, so we can't tell you yet what the price per copy will be. But we know you'll want to have one or two as family keepsakes. Stay tuned.

Here's a little information about El Paso, Texas, from Wikipedia (in future family updates we'll tell you a little bit

more about Fort Bliss, and also highlight the 4-day pass destinations of Las Cruces and Albuquerque, N.M., and Tucson, Ariz.).

El Paso

El Paso is the county seat of El Paso County, Texas. With a population of 606,913, El Paso is the sixth-largest city in Texas and the 22nd-largest city in the United States. The metropolitan area, including all of El Paso County, has a population of 736,310.

El Paso stands on the Rio Grande River (Río Bravo del Norte), across the border from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The two cities have a combined population of 2,049,648, with Juárez accounting for two-thirds of the population. El Paso is surrounded by the Chihuahuan Desert.

El Paso is home to the University of Texas at El Paso (founded in 1914 as The Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy). Fort Bliss, a major United States Army installation, lies to the east and northeast of the city, extending north up to the White Sands Missile Range. The Franklin Mountains extend into El Paso from the north and nearly divide the



city into two sections, with downtown connecting the two sections at the south end of the mountain range.

El Paso is located at the intersection of three states (Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua) and two countries (the USA and Mexico), and is the only major Texas city on Mountain Time. When Juárez was on Central Time it was possible to celebrate New Year's twice in the same evening by travelling a very short distance across the state and into another country. Both cities are now on Mountain Time.

The city's elevation is 3,800 feet above sea level. North Franklin Peak towers over the city at 7,192 feet above sea level and is the highest peak in El Paso. Franklin Peak can be seen from 60 miles in all directions. The Franklin Mountains are home to a famous natural red-clay formation, the Thunderbird. The city has a total area of 250.5 square miles.

The 24,000-acre Franklin Mountains State Park is the largest urban park in the United States and resides entirely in El Paso, extending from the north and dividing the city into several sections along with Fort Bliss and the El Paso International Airport.

Many of you are preparing to head this way in April to see your soldiers during their 4-day pass. We have had a few questions about the progress of training and asked if training would get in the way of the pass period. The brigade commander is quite confident that training will be complete before you arrive.

We'll send additional updates as we have new information to pass on to you. We all appreciate your support back home.

— Lt. Col. Tim Donovan

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Photo Captions

Page 1 (top):

32nd Brigade soldiers from Charlie Troop, 105th Cavalry, conduct training on the IED Defeat Lane at Camp McGregor March 9. The training lane teaches soldiers how to recognize and react to potential IEDs. *Photo by Pfc. Tyler Lasure.*

Page 1 (middle):

After Action Reviews are an important part of training. Here soldiers from Headquarters Company, 1-128th Infantry discuss what they did right and what they need to do better after exercising their skills March 8 on the IED Defeat Lane at Camp McGregor. *Photo by Spc. Michelle Gonzalez.*

Page 1 (bottom):

Every 32nd Brigade soldier is getting a portrait taken in a field expedient photo studio set up under a shade tent at Camp McGregor. Here, Pfc. Tyler Lasure of the brigade public affairs section shoots a portrait of Spc. Daosamay Sitdamlong, Company A, 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion. Don't let the primitive studio setup fool you. The photos will be cropped so that each soldier is shown in front of a neutral background.

Page 2 (top):

Pfc. Jerrod Schleis keeps a watchful eye for IEDs during training for Troop C, 105th Cavalry. The troopers were training on the mounted IED Defeat Lane March 9. *Photo by Spc. Michelle Gonzalez.*

Page 2 (bottom):

The Franklin Mountains tower over El Paso's skyline in this photo from Wikipedia. Downtown El Paso is about 20 miles southwest of Camp McGregor and Contingency Operating Base (COL) Westbrook.
